1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

a surplus to barter with the Moormen on their annual visit, or to take into the nearest Sinhalese village to exchange for iron, cloth, pots and occasional rice and coconuts.

Plate XIII represents the women of this group, the plates on which the men were photographed were accidentally destroyed shortly after we left Sitala Wanniya. Handuna whose height was 1·530 mm. (60¼ inches) looked a typical Vedda; Vela who was two inches taller also had a Vedda physiognomy though his appearance was not so typical; Kaira and Pema both looked as though they were of mixed blood, and Nila, height 1·555 mm. (61¼ inches), shown in Plate LV, would certainly not be taken for a Vedda at all.

Neither the assurance of a regular supply of food, nor the apathy produced by gradual starvation, had caused them to neglect their old ceremonies, and we found that once these people had overcome their shyness they were communicative, extremely courteous and merry. When the men understood they were free to come to our camp whenever they liked and that areca nut and betel leaves were always ready for them, they granted us the same freedom of their own cave, only stipulating that we should never allow our servants to go near it.

When they first led us to their cave we noticed that they stopped and shouted when about a quarter of a mile distant and did not proceed until an answering shout was heard. This they said was their custom and was equally observed whether they were accompanied by strangers or not. The place at which they stopped was their usual dancing ground as well as the spot on which pedlars were received and barter carried on, for strangers were never allowed to approach their caves or see their women.

Galmede. A family of Veddas of the Galmede group, seen at Godatalawa, consisted of ten persons who had left their old home in the Nuwaragala Hills, and who appeared to be moderately pure-blooded. The old man of the community proved a good informant, remembering a considerable number of old customs and invocations, but he was not a shaman, and as there was not one in the community most of the customs had fallen into desuetude. The members of this community were living on a very poor chena and, when we saw them, were in great difficulties as

[Erratum; see p. xx. — Ananlyst]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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622 unconsciously fostered by him. A brief account of our visit to
156 Dambani will best show the present condition of these people.

While in the jungle we were suddenly met by four Veddas,
177 who greeted the Arachi in a deep and apparently fierce tone, he
576 returning the greeting in the same manner. To our surprise these men came up to one of us (C. G. S.), shook hands, and then turned and led us to their village, on the way to which we passed a couple of "tame" buffalo that tried to charge
[361] us. There were three huts in the village and the headman's wife—not at all shy or diffident—after shaking hands took one of us (B. Z. S.) by the arm and led her into a hut. This
[342] had a good roof and walls of sticks, only one side being closed by bark slats, it was full of pumpkins and other chena
126 produce, which were however soon removed. We then sat down to take vocabularies, as the talk going on around us sounded quite different from Sinhalese and they professed not to understand our interpreter who was unable to follow them. So we
574 spoke through the Arachi. The headman's wife brought us each
609 some honey and yams and commanded us to eat. We sucked
431 the honey comb, but that did not satisfy her and she tried to feed one of us (B. Z. S.) with yams herself and to pour water down her throat. After giving us a few Vedda words, the Vidane (headman) began to talk very angrily and then stalked out of the hut. He complained that we had not given him presents and refused to speak another word until we gave him something. Other men came into the village making a total of about 10 or 11 grown men and some boys, but only two middle-aged women, the wife of the Vidane and another, so it was evident that there were other huts in the neighbourhood. We told the Vidane that our carriers would bring presents and made him and a few other men come back to the hut. But after every two or three words there were more angry protests and our interpreter explained that "other white men had not treated them so." When they raised their voices their talk sounded fierce, every word being shouted with emphasis and accompanied by scowling looks. Then we found out from the Arachi that these like the Danigala Veddas were "show Veddas" who had been utterly spoilt by presents from "distinguished visitors," some of whom

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

614 they belonged, which suggested to us that perhaps they belonged to Uru *waruge* or one of the other clans which are considered of inferior status. Although the Arachi of Belligala did not know their *waruge* and believed that they had really forgotten them themselves, our opinion was confirmed by information obtained later from the Arachi of Alutnuwara who said that they were of the Uru and Namadewa *waruge*, while a Vedda of Horaborawewa told us that his mother came from Dambani and she was a Namadewa woman.

576 609 As the Arachi of Belligala assured us the Bulugahaladena Veddas lived in a condition precisely similar to those of Dambani, we did not visit their village but arranged for two of them to visit us at Belligala; they greeted us in the same way as the Dambani folk, with loud and guttural voices, accentuating all the "chs," and shook hands. They brought some honey and yams. They said they could not bring *bambara* honey (for it was too early in the year) so they had brought honey from the stingless bee. After a little while they gradually dropped their [194] guttural tones, especially when they were speaking to the villagers and not to us, their voices, naturally deep, assumed a sing-song tone not unlike that of Nila of Sitala Wanniya. We consider that the gruffness of these Veddas is almost entirely affectation. They have been expected to be sullen and morose and never to laugh. For thirty years the Arachi of Belligala has acted as "show-man" to the Veddas of his district, and he always speaks to them in their "language" in similar or even fiercer tones, and he has shown them so many white men that he has quite lost count of their number. He has thus helped to keep up the fiction of "wildness," for these Veddas are not wild since they are not shy but come up, shake hands, ask for presents, and offer to dance.

178 We believe that they keep up few, if any, of the old Vedda customs; they cultivate chenas and keep cattle, their bows and arrows are probably more for show than use, for the Arachi told us that some of them possess guns while others go to the Sinhalese and borrow them. Deschamps says that Veddas never 157 laugh nor have they ever been seen to smile. Of course this is not true of the Veddas of Nilgala, nor do we think it is true of

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Terms of respect were commonly used in addressing the aged, thus although *siya* or *mutta* really mean father or grandfather, these words might be used as terms of respect in addressing any old man, and in the same way the terms *kiriamma* (grandmother) or *atta* might be used to any old woman, and we were told that *siya* was constantly used by members of the group in addressing the "senior" or patriarch. An individual of either sex would call his or her father-in-law's father *siya* or *kiriappa*, and a mother-in-law's mother is addressed as *kiriamma*.

Clan Organization.

It has already been mentioned that the Veddas at the present day are divided into clans (*waruge*); almost every man who calls himself a Vedda can give the name of his *waruge* and this applies even to many village and coast Veddas in whom there is a minimum of true Vedda blood. The clan organization of the Veddas was first pointed out by Nevill, who says: "The Veddas north of the Mahawaeli Ganga have lost their original divisions... and reduced to a few isolated families....The Vaeddas known as coast Vaeddas have abandoned most of their ancestral customs and I cannot even ascertain from them their original name. Vaeddas of the forest districts do not preserve any tradition of relationship with these Vaeddas of the coast[1]." Nevill then gives the following nine names as those of the Vedda clans, to which he adds the Veddas of Tambalagama Pattu, Kattakulam Pattu and Anurajapura as true Veddas though their *waruge* names seem lost.

1. Morana waruge.
2. Unapana waruge.
3. Bandara or Rugam waruge.
4. Namada, Namadana or Nabadana waruge.
5. Ura-wadiya waruge.
6. Uruwa waruge.
7. Kowil waname.
8. Aembala or Ambala waruge.
9. Tala waruge.

[1] *Taprobanian*, Vol. 1, 1886, p. 176.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

men explained that though the ceremonies themselves might be performed anywhere the women would not come to our camp, so the dances must take place at the usual dancing ground in the jungle. The day after hearing the phonograph at our camp, the men came to us to request that we should take it to the cave as they had told their wives about it, and they all wanted to hear it too. From these examples the position of Vedda women will be understood.

Writing in 1887 Nevill notices a similar state. "As a rule, among the purer Veddas, the younger women are rigorously excluded or rather protected from contact with strangers. They occupy, however, an honourable and free position in the society of their relations. I only once saw the good-looking girls of the pure Vedda family. My guide was then ahead of our party with me, and abruptly, without explanation further than the word 'my house,' dived into the forest, beckoning me to follow. We had only gone a few hundred yards from the path, when we reached a glade with a little shed. Here a party of girls and women and children were collected, and at sight of us the younger women began to slip away into the woods, but at a word from my guide stopped. They then advanced and one by one stepped up to me with graceful courtesy, each making a Sinhalese bow with both hands when quite close to me, and then stepped aside, with or without a few words of simple welcome. There was no haste or reluctance, nor any approach to curiosity shown. I stopped talking with some of the elder women for a short time, and then went on. Three or four of the women had most exquisite figures, like statues of Psyche, and a clear brown skin. They were bare to the waist, and from the knees down. I never saw Vaedda women at all comparable to these, and then only did I realise the stories I had heard from Sinhalese, of the former great beauty of the Vaedda women. On our return, the clan met us by official appointment; but these girls, and one equally statuesque young mother, were conspicuously absent, and I saw it was understood I should regard my interview as a confidential honour, intentionally arranged to make me feel I was personally trusted and distinguished.

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

full of people. To our left was a shrine set up against the jungle wall in that quarter. In a space left clear in front of the shrine stood what can best be described as a sort of "maypole," and between the "maypole" and the spectators was a small area enclosed by lengths of coloured cloth stretched between upright sticks. Within this area could be seen a small temporary booth, with human figures moving about a fire, over which, the Chief Headman informed me, rice was being cooked to be offered to the goddess.

When we reached the clearing the ceremony had not yet begun. I was conducted to a seat of honour in the front row of the spectators, and sat there for some minutes looking round with interest on the scene, which was lighted here and there by the flare of torches, and listening to the monotonous throb of the tom-tom, which was apparently being played somewhere close by in the jungle. Suddenly the tom-tom took on a more staccato note. Excitement rose among the spectators; and presently, from a gap in the jungle wall on my right and rather behind me as I sat facing the shrine, there defiled into the clearing a procession which slowly threaded its way through the ranks of the spectators to the clear space in front of the shrine. In this procession there were carried two wooden ceremonial swords,[6] which were to be prominent in the dances which followed. In front of the shrine the procession stopped, and a ritual of some sort, the exact nature of which it was impossible to gather in the semi-darkness, was gone through.

At the conclusion of the ritual at the shrine a red flag, bearing embroidered upon it the sun and moon and two human figures, and another device the details of which I was unable to distinguish, but which was possibly the figure of a ship, the emblem of Kapalpe, was hoisted upon the "maypole." This was, perhaps, the formal beginning of the ceremony, for after the hoisting of the flag flowers were brought in baskets, as a mark of respect, to the Chief Headman and myself. Under the Chief Headman's

[6] These swords resembled the ceremonial swords (*ran haduwa*) seen by the Seligmanns *only* in the ceremony of the invocation of Rahu Yaku at Sitala Wanniya, (fifty miles from the place at which the ceremony here described was performed), and illustrated on p. 256 of *The Veddas*.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5
Sinhalese AX4

to something; but it was long before I saw the bird, a veritable leaf among the leaves and more motionless than they.

The hilly jungles of central Ceylon echo, during certain seasons of the year, to this bird's incessant cry, the popular onomatopoeic renderings of which are, in English, "Captain Philpotts" and "Bring the tappal" and in Sinhalese "*Botuakappan.*" Most people have heard, but very few seen, the shy author of these dolorous notes. There is a gruesome story associated with the bird:—A Sinhalese king once asked his dhoby, in order to test his marital fidelity, whether he would cut his wife's neck and bring him her head! "Oh! king," said the man falling at the monarch's feet, "even if you behead me I cannot do such a thing." The following day the king called up the dhoby's wife and made a similar request of her. She replied that she would do it. Going home she helped her husband with his bath, rubbed boiled limes on his head, and cooked him a good meal. Like a good wife she asked him to lay his head on her lap where he soon fell asleep. Then, with a knife she had in readiness, she cut his throat; and severing his neck, put the head into a pot, covered it with a cloth and carried it to the king. On the way she met a man who, singing, asked her, "What do you carry in the pot on your head?"

"I am taking *mee amba** to the king," answered the woman.

"Why cover it so carefully?" sang he.

"If I take them uncovered, wayfarers will ask me for them," she replied. "It is on a fine journey I go."

When she brought her gift to the king, he was incensed at her cruelty, and ordered her head to be struck off instantly. Ever after, has she gone about in the form of this bird, crying *botua-kappan* (cut the throat), as her one refrain.

While making our way through a tree-studded glade, we surprised two men carrying sacks of dried meat on their shoulders; through rents in the bags peeped unsavoury scraps of sambur, monkey and pig. Their first impulse on seeing us was to escape; for to shoot sambur legitimately, gun and game licences are necessary; and what money have they for these, who have barely the wherewithal to purchase the ammunition for their ramshackle muzzle-loaders.

When we camped, Kombua regaled us with Vedda songs of questionable taste chanted rapidly in a high nasal monotone, lengthened indefinitely by endless repetition, and accompanied in the last staves with a clapping of hands. To the suggestion that he should show his skill in archery he responded with alacrity; jumping up, he seized his weapons as if confident of skill. A fragment of paper, six inches square, placed fifteen paces away, was the mark. At the word he loosed his arrow. A clean miss! He walked up to the target and dashed it down in dudgeon, and nothing would induce him to shoot again. Archery is a lost art to the Veddas, though they still have considerable skill in fashioning bows and arrows. Jungles that echo to guns are no places for bowmen.

Kombua's farewell was as bizarre as his greeting of us. Tossing head and hands in the direction we were taking, and tapping us on the chest, he wished us good going in tones more peremptory than complaisant.

Quite a number of our carriers were half-Veddas. There was one whose constant occupation was to run his fingers comb-fashion through his upstanding hair scraping out vermin. His expression was of that thoughtful seriousness which is the surest mark of profound vacuity.

*A species of mango.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

familiarity savouring even of impudence and disrespect. But that is because they know no better. I have had a Vedda address me as "*iho*," a word now used only towards a very inferior person. A Vedda once took my gun and cartridge-bag to shoot us something for dinner. He returned empty-handed and disgruntled. I inquired what ailed him. 181 [576]

"What sort of cartridges are these?" he said, throwing down the bag contemptuously. "You fire at a wanderoo, and he sits and grins at you. You fire again, and he grins the more. You want six or seven big shot for animals, not *kurrukkan* grains."

I asked him how he knew the size of the shot in my cartridges. He answered that he had looked inside. It was not until the next day that I realised the thoroughness of his investigation. Every single cartridge in the bag, some fifty or more, had its wad at a rakish tilt! When I upbraided him for the liberty, he disarmed my wrath by laughing uproariously.

On one occasion we had pitched our tent under a big tree which caught fire through the carelessness of our cook who had pursued his occupation by its foot. As I lay in bed ignorant of a blazing branch overhead, I was warned repeatedly by the carriers of the danger of my position; but to these anxieties my tiredness made me deaf. "After to-night," said a Vedda, "no devil will be able to return to Colombo!" The words were electrical in effect—and in good time too, for the branch fell just as the tent was dismantled.

The quaintness of the Vedda language is always a delight. Not knowing the art of dissembling, they say just what they think. They are capable of exquisite and spontaneous similes and metaphors. Vulgarity is natural to them, and their talk is interlarded with phrases that would make a navvy blush.

I have said that a Vedda laughed uproariously. Now, it has been stated repeatedly, by persons professing to know all about Veddas, that these people are incapable of laughter. The statements have even gone to grotesque lengths as the sub-joined extract testifies.* When a 181 152

*THEY NEVER LAUGH

MOST SOLEMN TRIBES IN THE WORLD.

Laughter, and the faculty of being merry and bright, are gifts of the gods to a world in which there is not too much sunshine at any time.

But this gift, according to the scientists who know all about these subjects, has been denied to the Veddas, the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon. It is the only people in the world who never laugh, and in consequence they are thin and flabby folk, and a fat man among the Veddas would be an extraordinary sight for sad eyes. A traveller who has studied the early races in Ceylon gives some interesting particulars about this curious tribe.

For nearly 2000 years, according to the best chronicles, these people, now almost extinct, have preserved the same characteristics, and no one, so far as history reveals, has ever seen a smile on the face of one of them or heard a laugh while in their section of Ceylon.

Why these people do not smile is a mystery. They alone of all the people on the earth know nothing of the sensation of laughter.

A scientist, who recently journeyed to Ceylon for the purpose of investigating this question, persuaded some of them to permit him to tickle them in the ribs and in the middle of their feet with straws, and never caught even the flicker of a smile on their faces, nor did he ever succeed in making one of them squirm and laugh aloud during the operation.

(*Continued on next page*)

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

interfusion of Vedda blood—the apathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta; six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya; thence seven to Beligalla which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled; and *chenas* are frequently met with; changing from year to year, these often absorb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously. 131

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne. 101 [301] [157]

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women. [361] [626] 152]

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine. 576 [411]

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for Vedda habitations; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukhan* and maize here; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community. 342 [241]

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the same as those of Bulugahadena; and so were the others we met scattered about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life; but they were obviously there for our benefit! 101 361

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by their nearness to Badulla and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting. 161 177

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from 224